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AUTHOR Comstock, Barbara G.; Feeley, Joan T.
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ABSTRACT

In order to evaluate the M.Ed. in Reading Program at William Paterson College (New Jersey), a study surveyed 56 recent graduates of the program for their responses to three questions: (1) How do graduates evaluate the total program and its components? (2) How "professional" are the graduates? and (3) How well do graduates do in the marketplace? The total program received a "Very Valuable" rating, with specific components receiving individual ratings, with recommendations for improvement. Professionalism of program graduates--measured by their publications, participation in conferences and workshops, membership in associations, the reading of professional journals, and interest in graduate work--was ranked as high. Job status before and after completion of the M.Ed. program was reported. (Eleven tables of data are included and 15 references and an appendix containing the survey instrument and letters are attached.) (SR)

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A Follow-Up Study of William Paterson College M.Ed. in Reading Program Graduates 1983-1987

Barbara G. Comstock

Dr. Joan T. Feeley

William Paterson College: Wayne, NJ

May 21, 1988

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

William Paterson College has been involved in teacher preparation in the field or reading for forty years, the first undergraduate course being offered in 1938. In 1960 the college developed the first state approved graduate reading degree program. From the mid 1970's until the present, the M.Ed. in Reading curriculum has been based on guidelines set up by the New Jersey Department of Education for the Reading Specialist Certification and criteria suggested by the International Reading Association. This curriculum was designed to develop reading specialists who are equipped not only to diagnose and correct reading problems, but also to set up reading programs and deliver needed staff development and in-service training.

A minimum of 33 s.h. is required to obtain the advanced reading degree. A prerequisite in Intellectual Testing is necessary. The core is the "heart" of the program and it consists of developmental reading courses viewing reading "in the light of language acquisition and the Piagetian conceptual thinking model." (Provisional NCATE Report, 1982, V. 2, p. APF 4-1.) Students also learn to diagnose

children's reading difficulties, and they plan appropriate remediation in an actual on-campus clinical setting. Children for case studies are chosen from area schools. Graduate students also take a "practicum" course to study and critique actual developmental reading lessons in real classroom settings. Courses in secondary reading and supervision are included to enable students to be prepared for a consultant's duties K-12.

The directed electives (6-9 s.h.) and related electives (6 s.h.) include offerings in children's literature, teaching writing, psycholinguistics, and computer applications in reading.

Criteria for admissions into the Graduate Reading Program include a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.75, Graduate Record Examinations - minimum 450 verbal or 35 on the Miller Analogies Test, standard teacher's certificate, letters of recommendation, and two years (completed or in process) in classroom teaching experience.

Specific resources for the graduate program include Sarah Byrd Askew Library Curriculum Center and the instructional materials room located in the reading clinic.

An evaluation by Dr. H. Alan Robinson for the

Department of Education rated the program "Excellent," Category 1 in 1974. Dr. Jack Cassidy (1986) conducted an external Evaluation of the reading program. He cited several strengths which included: a superior faculty, exemplary practicum experiences, opportunities for action research, a wide selection of available curriculum materials, and a program providing "a breadth of experience and knowledge." (p.7)

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the William Paterson College M.Ed. in Reading Program. Specifically, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How do graduates evaluate the overall program and its components?
2. How professional are graduates of the William Paterson College M.Ed. in reading program?
3. Do reading specialist do better than graduates of other master programs in the "marketplace?"

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROBLEM

Over eighty men and women have received the M.Ed. in Reading from William Paterson College between 1983 and 1987. Their opinions and suggestions concerning the overall M.Ed. in Reading Program and its components can help the college facilitate changes which the graduates

deem necessary.

Although the master's program in reading is designed primarily to prepare teachers to carry out the responsibilities of a reading specialist/reading teacher in a school (K-12) or college, the increased training and education in reading can also promote better classroom teaching and management. The data collected from recent graduates for this study should not only indicate the effect of this training and education, as seen in current job status, but it should also help to improve and update the on-going M.Ed. in Reading Program.

LIMITATIONS

The following are limitations to this study:

1. The requirement of completing the entire study within the time constraints of the spring semester.

2. The exclusion of two questions concerning salary and years of experience was not discovered until the first mailing was completed.

3. The accuracy and truthfulness with which the graduates responded.

DEFINITIONS OF IMPORTANT TERMS

Reading Specialist - One who conducts in-service training of teachers and administrators, coordinates

instruction for individuals or groups having difficulty learning to read, diagnoses the nature and cause of the difficulty, plans developmental programs in reading for all students, recommends methods and materials to be used in district reading programs, and contributes to the evaluation of reading achievement of pupils. (Bureau of Teacher Education and Academic Credentials, 1976, p. 38.)

Remedial Reading Teacher/Specialist - One who remediates and plans instructional intervention at all levels. Provides service to students designated as having reading disabilities, reading difficulties, or environmental/educational deprivation. Coordinates reading services provided to each disabled learner in conjunction with the classroom teacher. (International Reading Association, 1986, p. 2-3.)

Teacher of Reading - This endorsement authorizes one to teach reading in all public schools. The holder must fulfill specific requirements, one of which is completion of a master degree program in reading including a supervised practicum (Bureau of Teacher Education and Academic Credentials, 1976, p. 101.)

SUMMARY

This study sought to evaluate the M.Ed. in Reading Program at William Paterson College by seeking the

opinions expressed by recent graduates concerning the overall reading program and its components. The degree of professionalism which alumni demonstrated and their job status were also concerns of this study.

The following chapter deals with current literature pertaining to this study and related research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

"Evaluation is essential for effective decision making. Without a good evaluation system one find's it difficult to make effective program changes." (Bean, Wilson, 1981, p. 57.) Before conducting a survey for the purpose of evaluation, one needs to have a designated plan of action to assure success. Anyone planning such an undertaking would be well advised to read Virginia L. Carter's report, How to Survey Your Readers, which sets up clear cut proposals based on current research which can simplify the survey process.

Carter (1982) cites the work of Hage et al. in offering seven steps to be considered in setting up a survey: defining objectives, determining sample design, deciding sample size, constructing a questionnaire, pretesting, collecting data, and reporting results. Of particular value to those contemplating a mail survey are Pride's twelve guidelines which give the researcher clear and simple strategies for insuring the return of completed questionnaires which is vital for the success of evaluation. (Carter, 1982.)

In addition to supplying a background for developing a useful survey, Carter furnishes sample questionnaires, cover letters, follow-up postcards, and

letters from different colleges and universities such as Rice University, Gallaudet College, and Baylor University. In effect, this report, according to the author, supplies a "recipe" for a beneficial survey.

FOLLOW-UP STUDIES

Citing the opinions of such noteworthies as Bond and Dykstra, Fry, Harris and Morrison, Ramsey, Cults, Singer, and Artley, Cheek (1980) states that the teacher is the key component in reading instruction. This being the case, and in light of high public interest in the teacher of reading, it would seem logical that teacher feedback concerning the adequacies or inadequacies of their preparation for the responsibility of teaching reading would be of overwhelming importance; therefore, the opinions and suggestions of these professionals concerning their academic preparation would seem to be necessary to make effective program changes to undergraduate and graduate reading curriculums.

The following are follow-up studies of graduates aimed at providing effective change through evaluation.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDY

Cheek (1980) conducted a follow-up study of educators to reveal how they felt about their undergraduate experiences in reading. Graduates from 37 colleges and universities in the United States and

Canada responded to a mailed questionnaire. They rated their educational experiences in terms of helpfulness and job preparation.

Classroom teachers and reading specialists rated their educational experiences as average, while college/university teachers ranked their experiences as above average for their position. Employment as a classroom teacher was considered the most helpful experience for current job position by all.

Diagnosis and remediation were seen as the most valuable courses by graduates, while introductory reading courses were identified as the least helpful.

Cheek concluded that more courses like practicum should be offered to help students relate classroom theory into actual practice. In addition, since classroom experience was rated so highly, it should be considered one of the pre-requisites for acceptance into the graduate programs. Further research to determine the specific reasons why foundation courses were rated so poorly was also advocated.

STUDIES OF GRADUATE READING PROGRAMS

Stolworthy (1986) conducted a follow-up survey of graduates of Washburn University, Kansas, in which they evaluated the masters reading degree program in regards to the overall quality of preparation they received.

The majority of graduates stated relevance to present or future occupational needs as the primary reason for selecting the reading program. All respondents to the questionnaire viewed their preparation to be adequate in all areas except for diagnosis. The overall reading degree program was rated adequate to exceedingly adequate.

Graduates rated the quality of instruction and student-faculty relationships as the main strengths of the reading degree program. A small number of respondents (33 percent) acknowledged Theoretical Foundations to be a weakness, in addition to provisions for advisement at 17 percent.

While it is admirable that this follow-up was conducted, the researcher voiced no conclusions or recommendations. There seem to be areas of the reading curriculum mentioned that need to be reexamined because of the weaknesses cited. The results of this survey should be acted upon.

Davi and Feeley (1983) conducted an evaluation of the William Paterson College, New Jersey, M.Ed. in Reading. The graduates responded to a mailed questionnaire in which they rated the program's components, in addition to answering questions concerning the degree of professionalism they

demonstrated and financial gains associated with completion of the program.

Graduates rated most components of the program in the 3 to 4 point range which was considered valuable to very valuable. Advisement and study of teaching Secondary/College Reading were rated 2.8 (of Some Value to Valuable).

The main strengths of the program cited were specific instructors, strong emphasis on diagnosis/remediation, and special courses such as research, psycholinguistics and children's literature. Rigorous requirements also received mention.

Practicum was seen as the major weakness of the program, and it has since been revamped. Other weaknesses noted were needless paperwork, the necessity of developing an Informal Reading Inventory, and courses depending upon student presentations. Having to complete research and a project in one semester was also listed.

One half of the graduates planned to do further graduate work and 35 percent had already engaged in such work. A majority (80 percent) read professional journals regularly: The Reading Teacher and Journal of Reading were most frequently mentioned. Sixty-four percent participated in workshops and conferences while 40

percent belonged to reading associations. The International Reading Association and New Jersey Reading Associations were mentioned most often.

Graduates earning $15,000 to $19,999 per year accounted for 31.5 percent, while 29.8 percent earned $20,000 to $24,999 per year.

Eight recommendations dealing with the weaknesses and strengths of the program and based on respondent suggestions were included.

Hatoff (1980) conducted a follow-up study of the Reading Specialist graduates of Kean College, Union, New Jersey (KCNJ) in which the KCNJ program was evaluated by the graduates. The survey also was designed to tabulate the number of Reading specialists who were actually making use of their Reading Specialist Certificates.

One hundred fifty reading specialists graduating from KCNJ responded to the mailed questionnaires and telephone interviews. These graduates stated that the major reason for seeking Reading specialist Certification was for professional improvement.

Upon earning their Reading Specialist Certification, 89 percent of the graduates were teaching or using other certificates. At the time of this study, 25 percent listed themselves as classroom teachers, 24 percent as Reading Specialists, and 22 percent as

Remedial Reading Teachers. The remainder were scattered among Title 1, Compensatory Education, or non-educational professions. A large number of the Reading Specialists expressed that they did use their training in their present situation. Seventy-nine percent of the graduates felt KCNJ adequately prepared them for their positions, while 10 percent felt they were not adequately prepared.

There was a recommendation that this study be replicated in five years in order to maintain current information on graduates. At this time no such replication has been undertaken.

OTHER METHODS OF EVALUATION

Follow-up surveys are an important means of evaluating undergraduate and graduate programs. The review of current literature, however, provides information concerning other methods of evaluation which can be employed. This section is devoted to describing alternatives to questionnaires and interviews.

There seem to be limitations involved no matter which method of evaluation is used. Jack Gourman's Methodology uses a rating system from 200 to 800 in ranking undergraduate institutions. Each college is given two marks, one for academics and the other for non-academic areas. The problem with this methodology

seems to be the rater bias. For example, Webster (1977) states that Gourman considers the older the faculty of a department, the better they are, and thus they receive a higher rating than a fairly young faculty. This does not seem to be a very objective way to evaluate faculty. Other shortcomings were also mentioned concerning Gourman's Methodology.

Another rating method is the Exchange Method originated by Beverley Hulbert (as cited in Webster 1980). The Basic premise of this methodology is that it is only used for departments of Anthropology. One can rank the college or university by its hiring practices. For example, if William Paterson hires a graduate from Harvard for their Anthropology department, but Harvard fails to hire a William Paterson Anthropology graduate then Harvard has higher standards. This method, however, assumes all hiring is based on academic excellence of the departments and individual performances and qualifications are ignored.

Probably the most commonly used methodology for rating colleges and universities is having "experts" in their fields rate which departments they consider to be the best. Scully (1976) criticizes this type of evaluation saying it could easily be based on passed reputation rather than actual merit. He believes that

such a rating could be of value when considering peer scholarship and research, however, there are too many other areas such as: student quality, resources, environment and alumni that should also be considered when doing an evaluation.

Allington (1976) states that often doctoral reading programs are ranked on the number of doctoral students enrolled rather than the quality of dissertations produced. He mentions that only two universities ranked in the top ten as to number of dissertations completed for 72-73, had graduates awarded the International Reading Association Outstanding Dissertation Award, while the University of Alberta had eight recipients, and did not make the top ten because of a smaller amount of doctoral candidates.

After reading the literature conclusion pertaining to evaluation, it would be safe to conclude that anyone can devise a rating system for colleges or universities, but it may not be valid or reliable. There are many ways to evaluate programs, such as: informal self-evaluations; outside evaluations; interviews; expert evaluation; rankings based on the number of dissertations produced; types of hiring practices, and interviews. Graduates would be the most likely to know actual strengths and weaknesses of programs, and their

suggestions for change would be most appropriate, therefore, a graduate follow-up study is worthwhile.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the design of the study. The instrument, its suitability, reliability, and the data collection and treatment will be described in detail.

This project was prepared in conjunction with Dr. Joan Feeley, Professor, Department of Reading Language Arts, William Paterson College. Dr. Feeley guided the writer in developing the procedures and methods to be used in this project, which is modeled on two earlier studies (Davi and Feeley, 1983; Feeley, 1975).

As a preliminary activity, the writer reviewed current literature involving similar graduate follow-up studies and the procedures involved for the implementation of questionnaire surveys. Since the objective of this project was the evaluation of the William Paterson graduate reading program by graduates 1983-1987 using a mailed questionnaire similar to the ones reviewed, the readings provided the writer with background for carrying out this study which were considered necessary to complete such a study.

THE INSTRUMENT

The design of the questionnaire was based on an instrument which proved to be effective in a previous

study (Davi and Feeley, 1983). The earlier instrument was updated to fit the needs of this current study. Appropriate items were added, and those items considered now irrelevant were excluded. Essentially, a closed-form type of questionnaire resulted with the exception of a few open-ended questions to provide for unanticipated responses (Appendix).

Description

The first 12 items and items 14 and 15 were components of the program. Item 13 dealt with the library resources and facilities and item 16 sought to rate the total program. Graduates were asked to respond by checking a five-point scale...

Extremely Valuable	Very Valuable	Valuable	Of some Value	Of no Value

In addition a column to the far right coded NA-Not Applicable was provided for graduates who had no knowledge of a particular component due to their choice of electives.

Items 17 and 18 were open-ended questions asking graduates to describe valuable aspects or weaknesses of the program. Item 19 asked for suggestions.

Items 20 to 25 dealt with professional involvement, asking graduates about further graduate study, professional reading habits, published articles,

participation in workshops or conferences, and involvement in professional organizations.

Items 26 to 35 collected demographic information including job descriptions and salary data. Item 36 requested comments.

Suitability of Format and Reliability of Component Parts

The suitability of the format of the questions and the reliability of the items on the component parts of the program were established by a class of present M.Ed. in Reading students (N=10). They reviewed the questionnaire and suggested adjustments in wording and added additional items which seemed necessary. The Reading Language Arts Faculty also read the items for content validity, making minor changes and additions.

Reliability was established by pre-testing the instrument on members of the same class. They responded to the instrument twice, with a two-week interval between sessions.

Pearson Product Correlations were run on the two trials of the first 16 items. High positive significant correlations (.65 to .91) were found for most items. A few items had low positive non-significant correlations possibly because on the retrial the respondents answered hurriedly without much thinking due to classroom time constraints. The small size of this sample also may

have been a contributing factor. Since the students themselves had no comments regarding the clarity of item meaning, the questionnaire was not changed. It was decided, however that the items with low positive, non-significant correlations would have to be most carefully interpreted for the full sample.

A letter was written to explain the purpose of the study (Appendix). In addition, a follow-up letter was constructed to be mailed with additional questionnaire and self-addressed envelope to those graduates who had not responded by the deadline indicated in the first letter.

COLLECTION DATA

The names and addresses of reading specialists who had graduated from 1983 to 1987 were obtained from the graduate data-base.

The first questionnaire was mailed out on March 2, 1988, to 85 graduates, who were asked to complete the enclosed questionnaire, and return it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope by March 18, 1988. The follow-up mailing was done on March 24, 1988, for graduates not responding to the initial request. Two questions regarding years of experience and salary were added to the questionnaire in the follow-up mailing. Due to an oversight, these items were omitted from the first

survey.

Responses were received from 56 graduates (74%). Five graduates (.5%) never received the questionnaire in the mail because the letters were returned to William Paterson College.

TREATMENT OF THE DATA

The first 16 items, which evaluated components of the program and the total program itself and were responded to on a five-point likert-type scale, were treated by descriptive procedures. Means and standard deviations were generated for each item. If there seemed to be inconsistencies in some evaluations, these items were cross-checked by year of graduation to allow for changes which may have taken place over the course of the years 1978-87.

Responses to items 17-35 dealt with professional involvement of graduates, and they were tallied by frequencies and percents. The results were tabled for discussion and reporting purposes.

SUMMARY

This chapter was concerned with the design of the study. It described the methods and procedures used, description of the instrument, collection of data, and treatment of the data.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to evaluate the M.Ed. in Reading Program at William Paterson College. A questionnaire was designed and mailed to 85 graduates of the program from the years 1983-87. Responses were received from 56 graduates (64%). The following results and discussions are based upon their perceptions of the total program and its components and their answers to the questions asked.

Question one: How do the graduates evaluate the program and its components?

The respondents rated the total program and its components on a five-point scale (5 = Extremely Valuable; 4 = Very Valuable; 3 = Valuable; 2 = Of Some Value; 1 = Of No Value; O=NA Not Applicable). The NA responses were not counted in developing the means.

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for components. Most of the means are in the 3.0 to 4.4 point range, demonstrating that these graduates rated the program and its components as being valuable to very valuable.

Specifically, the study of developmental reading, the study and practice in diagnosis/remediation and teaching in a tutorial setting, the study of practical

classroom applications, and the study of the writing process/reading writing connections received Very Valuable ratings. While diagnosis and developmental reading received an identical rating in the Davi-Feeley study (1983), remediation, and teaching in a tutorial setting were seen as Valuable. The study of the writing process/reading writing connections was not offered at that time. Also, the Likert scale was not used to evaluate the study of practical application in the classroom. In the 1983 follow-up, practicum was mentioned as a weakness, but the sources of the dissatisfaction, teaching the course at a local elementary school or in Saturday clinic, have since been addressed. Graduate students are now observed in their own classroom settings.

In the present survey the study of psychological tests, psychological and linguistic foundations, teaching secondary/college reading, and children's literature were rated Valuable to Very Valuable. Also, the research component, and the library resources/facilities were rated the same as above.

David and Feeley (1983) did not include the library resources and facilities as a component to be evaluated. With the exception of teaching secondary/college and the study of psychological and

linguistic foundations, the other components received the same rating as this present study. It should be noted that "psycholinguistic foundations" (1983) was rated Very Valuable. Respondents may have had difficulty making a connection between psycholinguistics and the study of psychological and linguistic foundations when rating this component for the present study. Although it was seen as valuable, the component was cited as a strength 17 times by graduates. This item needs to be reworded in future follow-up studies.

The study of computer applications in reading RLA 520 also received a 3.0 (Valuable) rating. There are many confounding variables that could have affected this item. A large number of respondents 22 (37%) marked it as being Not Applicable. The computer component was built into the old RLA 520 Developmental Reading course, and the resulting course, Developmental Reading with Computer Application was renamed to meet state department requirements that graduate courses not be methods courses. Graduates rated the study of developmental reading very high (4.4); they may have been responding to the original course or the developmental reading with computers. The new name may have caused confusion.

Table 1

Graduate Ratings of the Program and its Components

N = 56

	Component	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	Study of reading as a developmental process	4.4	.77
2.	Study of psychological tests	3.7	.99
3.	Study of psychological and linguistic foundations	3.8	1.02
4.	Study/practice diagnosis	4.4	.88
5.	Study/practice in remediation	4.3	.95
6.	Study/practice in tutorial setting	4.0	1.03
7.	Study of practical applications in classroom	4.1	.98
8.	Study of teaching secondary/ college reading	3.3	1.29
9.	Study of administration/supervision	2.9	1.18
10.	Study of children's literature	3.8	1.22
11.	Study of research in reading	3.7	1.07
12.	Planning/carrying out research project	3.6	1.22
13.	Library resources/facilities	3.7	1.02

	Component	$\bar{X}$	SD
14.	Study of writing/process reading writing connection	4.2	.96
15.	Study of computer application in reading	3.0	1.06
16.	Rate the total program	4.1	.83

The study of administration/supervision was rated 2.9 (Of Some Value to Valuable). Some reasons for this evaluation may be: (1) It was sometimes offered as a summer course, and one graduate commented that it was not very well organized and too comprehensive for this short session; (2) There was a change in instructors and curriculum with a large number of graduates from the years 1983-84 rating the program on the low side, while most graduates from 1985-87 rating the course as Valuable.

The total program received a Very Valuable rating. This finding correlates positively with Cassidy's 1986 external evaluation of the reading program and the NCATE (1982) Provisional Report.

As part of their evaluation of the program, graduates were requested to list positive aspects, weaknesses, and suggestions for improvement. Only those items mentioned two or more times are included in the following Tables.

A summary of what graduates cited as positive aspects of the program may be seen in Table 2. Specific instructors were listed over 20 times. The strong emphasis on diagnosis/remediation was mentioned 19 times. The course, Psycholinguistics, received 17 positive comments, while the research project and

emphasis on the reading/writing connections were highlighted seven times. Courses such as reading practicum, psychological testing, children's literature, adolescent literature, and the project for administration/supervision were considered positive aspects. Features combining theory and practice, the emphasis on teaching reading comprehension and types of questioning techniques, the exploration of the reading process, the whole language approach to teaching literacy, and practical ideas for teaching reading in the content areas were also mentioned.

Specific instructors were also mentioned as the chief strength of the 1983 study, and Cassidy (1986) noted that the faculty displayed: scholarship; teaching excellence; professional involvement; task commitment, and personal involvement with students. He determined that the reading program at William Paterson College was strong based primarily on the quality of the staff.

With the exception of emphasis on the reading-writing connection and the whole language approach, which are fairly new to the reading program, the positive aspects expressed in the 1983 study were very similar to those mentioned in this present study. Emphasis on diagnosis/remediation ranked second as a

strength. This acknowledgment coincides with Cassidy's 1986 external evaluation of the reading program which also saw these two components as "exemplary," providing very practical and valuable practicum experience.

Psycholinguistics and research were mentioned in the 1983 follow-up as major strengths of the reading program.

This finding is in keeping with Cassidy (1986) who cited opportunity for action research as "excellent" in the graduate reading program.

Table 2

Valuable Aspects Mentioned

	Positive Aspects Mentioned	Frequency
1.	Instructors	21
2.	Emphasis on diagnosis/remediation	19
3.	Psycholinguistics course	17
4.	Research project	7
5.	Emphasis on the reading-writing connection	7
6.	Combining theory with practice	5
7.	Practicum	6
8.	Psychological testing	4
9.	Children's literature	3
10.	Emphasis on teaching reading comprehension	3
11.	Emphasis on types of questioning techniques	3
12.	Adolescent literature	2
13.	Project for administration/supervision	2
14.	Emphasis on exploration of the reading process	2
15.	Practical ideas for teaching reading in content area	2
16.	Emphasis on whole language approach	2

Table 3 list what the graduates perceived as major weaknesses of the program. Instructors (unnamed) were cited 13 times. Some graduates mentioned that they thought students worked harder than some professors, and that the teachers should stay more "current" with what is happening. One graduate stated the requirement of watching many "uninteresting" filmstrips was unnecessary.

Davi and Feeley (1983) showed graduates also ranking specific instructors as a major weakness. It appears that personal preference as to personality and instructional practices is responsible for this contradiction of instructors being listed as the chief positive aspect of the graduate reading program as well as a weakness. To counter this perceived weakness, Cassidy (1986) found no deficiencies in the staff after interviewing current graduate students and inspecting instructor credentials.

Specific courses such as diagnosis/remediation and teaching secondary reading were mentioned despite the fact that the diagnosis/remediation items received high means in the components evaluation (4 plus). Graduates

Table 3

Weaknesses of Program

	Weakness Mentioned	Frequency
1.	Instructors	13
2.	Diagnosis/remediation	5
3.	Teaching reading in secondary/college	4
4.	Need for more children's literature	3
5.	Lack of computer applications	3
6.	Psychological testing	2
7.	Excessive workload	2
8.	Preparation of an IRI	2
9.	Insufficient exposure to reading materials/devices	2
10.	Repetitious classes	2

expressed a need for more instructional materials and better methods of dealing with the absences of clinic students. This year each graduate student worked with two clinic students so that if one were absent, a session could still be held for the other. In addition, after interviewing Dr. Turkish, the instructor in charge of diagnosis and remediation, it was discovered that the clinic is operating on a small budget for acquiring new materials. Dr. Turkish commented that testing materials for diagnosis are expensive and that not many "extras" are affordable with just the money obtained from clinic students for instruction. She has spent her own money in some instances to purchase desired supplies, and instructors donate curriculum samples from publishers to supply the clinic resource room.

Cassidy (1986) noticed that the library and reading clinic exposed students to a wide variety of instruction materials, but he also recommended a new site for the clinic room, since it had an insufficient amount of space for storage. Other alternatives might be installing built-in shelves from floor to ceiling and hiring either a graduate assistant or more work study students to help with the extensive job of running such a resource room.

Teaching reading in secondary/college was cited four times, while psychological testing and lack of computer applications were listed three times as weaknesses. The course RLA 520, concerning reading with computers was discussed earlier. It should be noted that Cassidy (1986) recommended that this course be made into two separate courses to allow for more "in-depth" knowledge of computers. Cassidy also suggested making teaching reading in secondary/college an elective course, since many students felt this course was not relevant to their needs as elementary teachers.

Excessive workload, preparing an IRI, and not having enough exposure to a variety of reading materials were cited as weaknesses twice each.

Graduates were asked to give suggestions for changes which they deemed necessary. A summary of these suggestions can be seen in Table 4.

Improvement of staff was mentioned five times. One graduate suggested that course curriculums should be reviewed by the head of the Department in order to insure that professors keep current.

There were some references to specific courses in this section. Four graduates mentioned that more time was needed to complete the research project. This area

had been a concern of previous graduates as well. Researching and completing a project in one semester is a difficult task. However, when the opportunity was offered to students to take a second semester of research in lieu of an elective, only five took it. To require two semesters of research would "close up" the program completely for many by eliminating electives. Some other alternatives to this problem might be: (1) Making the M.Ed. in reading 36 semester hours, including two semesters of research; (2) Developing a mentoring program whereby the college would fund professors with mentoring fees paid by graduate students to work with them until their research projects were completed; (3) Modifying the research component to allow groups of graduate students to work together on group projects using a process writing format. This would cut down on time needed to conference with the professor individually, and the sharing of the workload would make the course more manageable timewise. A need for change is evident.

Table 4

Suggestion for Change

	Suggestions Mentioned	Frequency
1.	Increase integration of theory and practice	7
2.	Improve staff	5
3.	Develop more in-depth study of administration/supervision	4
4.	Increase time to complete the research project	4
5.	Increase emphasis on diagnosis/ remediation	2
6.	Change sequence of courses- psycholinguistics first	2
7.	Increase reading/writing courses	2
8.	Increase emphasis on psycholinguistic theory	2
9.	Eliminate the IRI	2
10.	Make computer applications mandatory	2

The graduates suggested that more practical experiences should be added to the curriculum seven times. One person suggested that the opportunity of working with reading specialists in the field might be beneficial. There seemed to be a need for more "hands on" type of activities with four respondents stating a need for more in-depth study of administration/supervision. Graduates expressed a desire for more ideas and techniques for developing in-service training, writing budgets, and keeping school records. The three suggestions for more emphasis on diagnosis and remediation appeared to follow this desire for practicality.

Graduates also suggested more reading/writing courses, more emphasis on psycholinguistic theory, and making computer applications mandatory. Changing the sequencing of courses to allow psycholinguistics to be taken as a first course was also cited twice. The course sequence as it stands, however, is largely dictated by the state certification (Reading Specialist) process; not too much can be done unless there are changes in Trenton.

Question Two: How "professional" are the graduates of the program?

To demonstrate the level of professionalism among

graduates, questions were asked concerning their interest in further graduate work, their professional reading habits, their participation in workshops/conferences, and their membership in reading associations.

As seen in Table 5, while 27% plan to pursue further graduate work, 34% have already engaged in further study, and 53% are possibly planning such an endeavor.

Forty-six percent of the graduates read journals regularly, while 45% mention reading them sometimes as can be seen in Table 6. Only 3 graduates, less than 1% stated that they never read professional journals. The Reading Teacher and Journal of Reading were mentioned as the most frequently read publications. This is predictable since the two journals are de rigueur for reading teachers.

As indicated in Table 5, eight graduates have had articles published in journals and one respondent has an article in progress. Complete references were not obtainable for all. One graduate gave no titles for the articles she had written. Graduates had articles published in such noteworthy journals as The Reading Instructor Journal, English Journal, and American School Board Journal. One graduate also listed book

credits, Food Allergies and Aids: Separating the Fears from Facts.

Seventy-one percent of the graduates related that they participated in professional workshops/conferences, and 52% stated they were members in reading associations (Table 5).

Many graduates attended conferences at William Paterson College as can be seen in Table 8. Seven were in attendance at the New Jersey Reading Association Conferences, and six participated in district in-service workshops. Columbia University and the International Reading Association hosted conferences attended by 5 graduates each. In addition to these conferences and the ones cited in Table 8, the following conferences received singular mention: Caroline Bauer-Story Telling, The Early Childhood Association, Educational Improvement Center, Kean College, Fordham University, and Houghton Mifflin.

International Reading Association affiliates were most mentioned as professional organizations joined. Twenty graduates belong to the IRA; 8 to the New Jersey Reading Association (State IRA); 2 to the North Jersey Council IRA. (See Table 9). Other associations such as ALAN, Kappa Delta Pi, The Early Childhood Association, and the Educational Media Association were also cited.

Table 5

How Professional Are the Graduates?

Question	Yes		No		Maybe		In Progress	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Have you engaged in further graduate work:	19	34	37	66				
Do you plan to pursue further graduate study?	16	27	11	20	30	53		
Have you published any articles or books?	8	14	46	82				
Have you participated in any workshops/ conferences?	40	71	17	29				
Are you a member of an association concerned with reading?	29	52	27	48				

Table 6

Do Graduates Read Professional Journals?

Regularly		Sometimes		Not At All	
N	%	N	%	N	%
26	46	27	48	3	.05

Table 7

Publications Read Regularly

	Name	Frequency
1.	The Reading Teacher	27
2.	Journal of Reading	7
3.	NJEA REVIEW	3
4.	Reading Instruction Journal	2
5.	Language Arts	2
6.	Reading Today	2

Table 8

Conferences Attend By Graduates

	Conference	Frequency
1.	William Paterson College*	13
2.	New Jersey Reading Association	7
3.	In-service workshops*	6
4.	Columbia University-Reading/Writing	5
5.	International Reading Association	5
6.	New Jersey Educational Association	4
7.	New Jersey State Conference for Teachers of Reading*	3
8.	New Jersey State Department	2

*Conferences in which graduates have participated as presenters.

Table 9

Professional Organizations Graduates Join

	Organization	Frequency
1.	International Reading Association	20
2.	New Jersey Reading Association	8
3.	North Jersey Council IRA	2

To recapitulate, 19% of the graduates are already engaged in further graduate work, while 27% definitely plan to pursue such studies, and 53% feel that it is a possibility in the future. Less than 1% of the respondents never read professional journals, while 71% participated in workshops/conferences. Fifty-two percent are members of associations concerned with reading, and 14% have published articles or books. These findings indicate that the majority of the William Paterson College reading graduates are, indeed, professionals.

Question Three: Do reading specialists do better than graduates of other master degree programs in the "marketplace"?

Many people seek reading specialist certification to improve job status and to gain professional advancement. Table 10 lists the positions graduates held upon entering the program and the titles they now hold. Before taking the M.Ed. in reading program most graduates (29) were elementary teachers, six were teachers in the Basic Skills Instruction Program, and five were secondary English teachers. As can be seen in Table 10, the remaining graduates were substitutes, administrators (2), or at home (2). They were also reading teachers, basic skill coordinators, remedial

Table 10

	Position	Frequency
	Before	
1.	Elementary Teacher	29
2.	Secondary English Teacher	5
3.	Teachers in Basic Skills (Title, Chapter, Supplementary)	6
4.	Substitutes	4
5.	Administrator	2
6.	At Home (mother/homemaker)	2
7.	Reading Teacher K-8	1
8.	Basic Skills Coordinator	1
9.	Remedial Teacher K-8	1
10.	Student	1
11.	Business Education Teacher	1
12.	Special Education Teacher 9-12	1
	After	
1.	Elementary Teacher	21
2.	Teacher in Basic Skills	6
3.	Reading Specialist-Elementary	6
4.	English/Reading Secondary	5
5.	Principal/Administrator	3
6.	Content Teacher (Social Studies, Science)	1
7.	Special Education Teacher	1

Table 10 (continued)

Employment Before and After the M.Ed. Program

	Position	Frequency
	After	
8.	Counselor	1
9.	Student	1
10.	Communication Skills Teacher	1
11.	Pre-School Teacher	1
12.	Substitute	1
13.	Librarian	1
14.	Writer	1
15.	At Home (homemaker/mother)	1

teachers, students, business education teachers, and special education teachers. None held the title of reading specialist.

After completing the program 21 graduates were still elementary teachers, but six became reading specialist, six are Basic Skills Improvement Plan instructors, five function as secondary reading teachers, and three are administrators, other describe themselves as a writer, a content area teacher, a counselor, a student, a communication skills teacher, a pre-school teacher, a librarian, and a homemaker by choice.

While the majority of graduates are still elementary teachers, there is only one serving as a substitute; six are now reading specialists while before obtaining the M.Ed. in reading, none served in that capacity. There is also an additional administrator and a professional writer.

While most graduates are putting their reading background to good use, there appears a need to ask the following question on future survey questionnaires: "Are graduates serving as elementary teachers rather than reading specialists, or reading teachers because of choice, lack of available full-time reading positions, or the need to be made better aware of openings in these areas?"

Graduates were asked to supply the certification(s) they held when entering the program and those they acquired after earning an M.Ed. in reading (Table 11). Most graduates held Elementary (34) and English (12) certification upon entering the graduate reading program.

Four respondents were certified to teach in the early primary grades, while only three held teacher of reading certificates. All graduates qualified for the Reading specialist certification after completing the M.Ed. In addition, many acquired other certifications. Eleven obtained the teacher of reading endorsement; eleven gained certification as supervisors, and three garnered certification to be public school principals. This finding indicates that graduates aspire to increase their job status, with many going for administration and supervision certificates.

Only two graduates from the Paterson and Fort Lee school districts replied that holding the title "Reading Specialist" increased their salary beyond the Masters level. One graduate mentioned that having Reading Specialist certification increased her hourly wage as a private tutor.

The New Jersey Education Association (1987)

Table 11

Certification Obtained Before and After the M.Ed. Program

Certification		Frequency
	Before	
1.	Elementary Education	34
2.	English	12
3.	Early Childhood Education	4
4.	Reading Teacher	3
5.	High School	2
6.	Associate Education Media Specialist	2
7.	Permanent Teaching Certificate	2
8.	History	2
9.	Administration/Supervision	2
10.	Teacher of the Handicapped	1
11.	Pre-School	1
12.	Basic Skills in Education	1
13.	N.J. Professional Librarian	1
14.	Social Studies	1
15.	Special Education	1
16.	Reading Specialist	1
	After	
1.	Reading Teacher	11
2.	Supervision	11

Table 11 (continued)

Certification Obtained Before and

After the M.Ed. Program

	Certification	Frequency
3.	Principal Certification	3
4.	Pre-School	2
5.	Early Childhood Education	2
6.	Elementary Education	1
7.	Administration & Curriculum	1
8.	Teacher of the Handicapped	1

published a report that establishes the fact that obtaining a masters degree increases a teacher's salary on salary guides in the State of New Jersey. Earning a masters degree affords an average salary increase of $1,645 as a first year teacher. In some districts acquiring a masters degree can increase yearly earnings by $2,600. Obtaining a M.Ed. in reading would, therefore, increase one's worth in the New Jersey "market place."

The final item on the questionnaire sought graduate comments. Twelve respondents extended good wishes to the writer, while five graduates expressed their positive attitudes about the M.Ed. in reading program at William Paterson College. These people indicated that the program involved " a lot of work," but it was "stimulating and current," and it helped them carry out their job responsibilities. Specific instructors were extended salutations in three instances. One graduate commented positively about the thoroughness of this survey.

There was one unfavorable comment which stated that the program was weak in the area of academic challenge, but the same graduate mentioned specific "good" instructors.

The necessity for experience as well as a "title" in obtaining a reading specialist position was mentioned by one respondent.

In conclusion, the comments received from the 42% of the graduates who responded to this item were largely favorable.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

This study sought to evaluate the William Paterson College M.Ed. in Reading Program. Graduates from 1982-87 were surveyed by questionnaire and requested: (1) to assess the total program and its components, (2) to give information about their professional activities, and (3) to describe their positions before and after completing the program.

Responses from a 64% return of the questionnaires (56 respondents) formed the data base from which the following conclusions may be drawn:

(1) Graduates were positive about the M.Ed. in Reading experience at William Paterson College rating the total program and most of its components as being Valuable to Very Valuable.

(2) While the staff appeared to be one of the major strengths of the program with specific instructors mentioned positively more than one-third of the time, some instructors (unnamed) were cited as weaknesses.

(3) Suggestions for change included more practical experiences (hands-on activities), and improvement in staff, more in-depth study of

administration/supervision, and increased time to complete research projects.

(4) As for professionalism, about one-fifth of the graduates are engaged in graduate work, while approximately one-third definitely plan to pursue such studies, and half see such study as a possibility. Fourteen percent have had articles or books published, 71% have participated in conferences/workshops, 52% belong to associations concerned with reading, and 99% read professional journals. M.Ed. graduates of William Paterson rank high as professionals interested in maintaining their competencies and growing in their general knowledge.

(5) As for job status, most graduates were elementary teachers, English teachers, or basic skills instructors upon entering the program. After completing the program, most were still serving as elementary and supplementary teachers, however, some had become reading specialists.

(6) While all graduates advance on the salary guide when earning a graduate degree, certification as a reading specialist and the performance of the corresponding duties only increased salary above the Masters level in two districts, as reported by respondents.

Recommendations

Based on graduate's ratings and suggestions, it is recommended that:

(1) There should be more integration of theory and practice. Students should be given "hands on" types of activities considered necessary to function as a reading teacher, specialist or supervisor.

(2) The quality and effectiveness of staff teaching practices should be evaluated regularly to help improve instruction and keep courses current.

(3) Ways to increase the time or credit for completing research projects should be pursued.

(4) Students should be encouraged to "keep current" and professional by reading journals, participating in workshops/conferences, and joining professional reading associations.

(5) Students should be encouraged to utilize their reading/writing courses by becoming authors themselves, pursuing publication possibilities in appropriate professional journals.

(6) Further research into employment patterns of graduates should be conducted.

(7) Evaluations such as this one should be conducted on a regular basis. The five-year cycle began in 1983 and replicated in 1988 seems to be appropriate.

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APPENDIX

Graduate Survey and Letters

About the Program

How valuable were the following components of your graduate program in reading to your professional life? Rate the components: 5=Extremely Valuable; 4=Very Valuable; 3=Valuable; 2=Of Some Value; 1=Of No Value; NA=Not Applicable.

	5	4	3	2	1	NA
1. Study of reading as a developmental process						
2. Study of widely used psychological tests						
3. Study of psychological and linguistic foundations of reading						
4. Study and practice in diagnosing reading difficulties						
5. Study and practice in teaching disabled readers						
6. Study and practice in teaching reading in a tutorial setting						
7. Study of practical applications of instructional techniques in the classroom setting						
8. Study of methods and materials for teaching secondary/college students to read						
9. Study of the administrative and supervisory roles of a reading specialist						
10. Study of children's literature						
11. Study of research in reading						
12. Planning, carrying out, and writing a research project.						
13. Library resources and facilities						
14. Study of the writing process and the reading-writing connection						
15. Study of computer applications in reading						
16. Rate the total program						

17. What were the most valuable aspects of the program? _____

_____

_____

_____

18. What were the weaknesses of the program? _____

_____

_____

_____

19. What suggestions do you have for change? _____

_____

_____

_____

About You

20. Since obtaining your M.Ed., have you engaged in further graduate study? If so, in what field and where?

Yes	No

21. Do you plan to pursue further graduate work?

Yes	No	Maybe

22. Do you read any professional journals? If so, which?

Regularly	Sometimes	Not At All

23. Have you published any articles or books? If so, indicate title/journal/year or title/publisher/date. (Use reverse side if needed)

Yes	No	In Progress

24. In the last five years, have you participated in any workshops or conferences dealing with the teaching of reading? If so, which? (Put a * next to those in which you were a leader or speaker. (Use reverse side if needed)

Yes	No

25. In the last five years have you been a member of an association concerned with reading? If so, which? (Put a * next to those in which you were an officer. Use reverse side if needed.)

Yes	No

26. Name (optional) _____

27. Male _____ Female _____

28. Year M.Ed. Awarded _____

29. School or Place of business _____

_____

Address _____

Street City County State Zip

Title (Give grade level if teaching or occupation if not teaching)

_____

30. What was your occupation when you started the M.Ed. course?

_____

31. What certifications did you have before entering the M.Ed. course?

_____

32. What certifications have you obtained since earning the M.Ed.?

_____

33. Does holding the title "Reading Specialist" increase your salary beyond the Masters level?

Yes	No

If so, how much? _____

34. What is your salary range?

a. Below 14,999
b. 15,000 - 19,999
c. 20,000 - 25,000
d. 25,000 - 30,000
e. over 30,000

35. How many years have you been teaching?

a. less than 5
b. 5 - 9
c. 10-14
d. 15-20
e. over 20

36. Comments:

Computer Code

The William Paterson College of New Jersey, Wayne, New Jersey 07470 • (201) 595-2331/2310

WPC

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

March 1, 1988

Dear _____:

I need your help to complete my graduate research project which is to evaluate the William Paterson Graduate Reading Program. The information recent graduates provide will help the college to facilitate any changes deemed necessary.

The enclosed questionnaire will take about ten minutes of your time. Please complete and return it in the enclosed stamped envelope by March 18, 1988.

A copy of this study will be available this summer at the WPC library should you wish to see the results. Your prompt and thoughtful completion of the attached survey will be GREATLY appreciated.

Sincerely,

Barbara G. Comstock
Graduate Student

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WPC

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

March 22, 1989

Dear Graduate:

I haven't yet received your completed questionnaire for the evaluation of the William Paterson College M.Ed. in Reading Program. This is a busy time for you I know, but your response will help me complete my graduate research project.

If you misplaced your original questionnaire, another copy is enclosed. Please take a few minutes to complete it now and return it in the stamped, addressed envelope, also enclosed. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Barbara G. Comstock

Barbara G. Comstock
Graduate Student

BGC/jrs
Enclosure.